

South Troy Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot Program Community Involvement Plan

A successful brownfields project requires the expertise of a wide range of professionals and stakeholders including environmental experts, planners, lenders, developers, and government agencies, but the success of the project is fundamentally tied to the commitment of property and business owners and community members. For that reason, community input is a critical feature of the South Troy Working Waterfront Brownfields Assessment Pilot Project

The community involvement effort will build upon the considerable community outreach and capacity building efforts of the South Troy Working Waterfront Revitalization Plan. The effort will include regular meetings with the Brownfields Task Force, well publicized community meetings and workshops, additional efforts to keep stakeholders and property owners informed, and a project website and newsletter. This document describes each of these elements in detail.

Task Force

The City, with support of River Street Planning and other team members will develop a Brownfields Task Force. This group of individuals will play a key role in the planning process, providing guidance, oversight and a forum for analysis throughout the project. The Task Force will be composed carefully to ensure that members represent a wide range of expertise and interests, while limiting potential personal or professional conflicts of interest. Members will be sought who represent all stakeholders including local businesses, non-profit organizations, government and affected neighborhoods.

Once established, River Street will work with the City to provide appropriate written and presentation materials for each Task Force meeting and ensure that appropriate members of the consulting team attend each Brownfields Task Force meeting to present findings and gather feedback at each step of the project.

Task Force meetings will be scheduled as necessary to ensure that the Task Force is fully informed and that the Project Team receives feedback from the Task Force at appropriate times in the project lifecycle. Possible meetings include:

- Project kick-off to describe the project and the role/expectations of the Task Force
- Presentation and discussion of the draft site ranking criteria
- Workshop to use the ranking criteria to select eight sites for further assessment
- Workshop to select one to three sites for Phase II testing
- Presentation and discussion of draft Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAMP)
- Presentation of results and implications of the Phase II assessment results
- Discussion of legal issues and needed organizational structure to implement site transfer, remediation and redevelopment
- Presentation of proposed remediation plan and implications for redevelopment
- Discussion of required Site Book contents and distribution strategies
- Final project meeting discussing next steps and future of the Task Force

Public Meetings

The five public meetings envisioned for the project will be the core of the community involvement effort. Five meetings, each at a critical moment in the project lifecycle, will provide opportunity for members of the public to learn about, comment upon and guide the project.

The paragraphs below describe both the outreach effort that will be undertaken to ensure a wide audience and the topics to be covered in each of the five public meetings.

Outreach

Significant effort will be placed on publicity for the public meetings to ensure that the broadest possible audience of interested stakeholders is assembled and that the public is aware of the project process.

River Street Planning will be responsible for developing the content for the outreach effort. This content will include the Brownfields Newsletter & Website (see below), text for a press release, and text for a letter to be used for direct marketing via mail or email. The content will be designed to inform as well as invite, so that even those who cannot attend the meeting will be familiar with the project and its progress.

The City of Troy will be responsible for production and distribution of the outreach materials, including all production and mailing/distribution costs and intends to use the following means to reach as many interested residents and business owners as possible.

Direct Organizational Contact

Local organizations will be contacted to see if they will publicize the meetings via their newsletters or electronic mailing lists. Organizations that will be approached will include elected officials, resident associations such as neighborhood groups, PTAs or religious organizations, business associates such as the Chamber of Commerce and Major Employers.

River Street will produce a draft email letter for use in contacting these organizations. City of Troy will be responsible for developing the contacts at the organizations and for contacting them. The draft email will be provided no later than approximately two weeks prior to the public meeting date.

Media

A press release will be distributed to: The Troy Record, The Advertiser, The Times Union, the Schenectady Gazette, the Capital District Business Review and the Troy United Inc. Newsletter. And a public notice of each meeting will be placed in the Troy Record.

River Street will be responsible for drafting the press release, City of Troy for providing the Release to the media. The draft press release will be provided to the City no later than approximately three weeks prior to the meeting date.

Posters

Low tech, but effective, simple posters will be hung in public spaces such as libraries, City Hall, neighborhood establishments, local schools, the Post Office branches and local businesses with community billboards.

River Street will be responsible for producing a camera ready copy of the poster, City of Troy for copying, distributing and posting. The draft poster will be provided to the City no later than approximately two weeks prior to the meeting date.

Mailings

Finally, the city will distribute two mailings prior to each public meeting. The first mailing, in the form of a formal letter, will be sent to the owner of record of each property within the study area as identified in the local assessment records.

The second mailing will go to a wider audience and will typically take the form of a simple post card mailing. This second mailing will be sent to all business owners who receive the first mailing, all members of the Brownfields Task Force, all people on the South Troy Working Waterfront Revitalization Project Mailing list, as well as anyone else who is identified as interested in the project. For example, sign-in sheets will be available at each public meeting, and anyone who signs in will receive subsequent mailings. In addition, the timing of the Brownfields Newsletter (see below) will be designed to enhance the outreach for the Public Meetings.

River Street will compose Newsletter and Post Card, the City will copy and distribute by mail and hand delivery. The draft Newsletter will be provided no later than approximately three weeks prior to the meeting date.

Meeting 1: Project Kick-off - Tentatively Scheduled November 20th, 2002

As a part of the project kick-off, River Street Planning and other team members will lead a community meeting in order to reach out to local residents, business and property owners and the public at large. The purpose of this initial community meeting will be to familiarize community members with brownfields issues, the remediation planning process and to explain the different opportunities they will have to participate. At the direction of the Brownfield Task Force and the City, this meeting may present the sites under consideration for investigation and remediation planning and the draft ranking criteria that will be used to select eight sites for consideration. We will provide materials and lead a group discussion to reconfirm community vision for the South Troy waterfront and refine the site selection criteria to best address community needs and aspirations.

Meeting 2: Initial Site Selection – To be scheduled in January, 2003

The second community meeting will present the South Troy sites as ranked by the evaluation criteria developed by the project team in consultation with the City and the Task Force. At the meeting, the Project Team will present the opportunities and constraints of each site and work with community members to develop a consensus regarding which of the eight sites have the strongest potential for redevelopment and should be considered for further analysis. Detailed maps will illustrate the opportunities and constraints offered by each site. This meeting will also discuss the next steps in the project.

Meeting 3: Final Site Screening - To be scheduled in March, 2003

The third community meeting will present the sites that are selected for further Phase II assessments and remediation planning. The Project Team will discuss the process for selecting the sites and relate how they address the issues raised by the City of Troy, the Brownfields Task Force and the community in the first two public meetings. The team will present the findings of the initial site assessments, describing the economic, environmental and location assets and limitations of each of the sites and summarize the process for determining which of the sites demonstrate the greatest opportunity for community and economic success.

Meeting 4: Phase II Assessments and End Use Planning Data – To be scheduled

Following the Phase II environmental assessment of the selected sites, our team will hold a fourth community meeting. The first task at this meeting will be to share information gained through the environmental site assessments and economic feasibility work. The second task will be to discuss specific issues raised by the economic and environmental research as well as project implementation and legal issues. The purpose of this workshop will be to test initial development and design recommendations and to generate feedback that will inform the redevelopment process on community needs and concerns.

This meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible after the completion of the Phase II Assessments.

Meeting 5: Remediation and Project Implementation

A fifth and final community meeting will present the final results of the project, laying out the needed remediation tasks and timeline and conceptual designs for the brownfields site including future land use recommendations. The purpose of this meeting is to not only inform the community of the final results of the plan, but to demonstrate how citizen and stakeholder input shaped the final outcome and to continue to build support for the implementation of the remediation plan and concept development.

This meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible after the completion of the Remediation Plan.

Stakeholder Contact

The interaction between the City and the stakeholders will play a significant role in the success of this project, and of its perceived success in the community. For that reason, River Street will make a significant effort to engage the business and property owners of the South Troy region in this process. Stakeholders have been identified as property owners, prospective property owners/developers, environmental organizations, neighborhood residents and association leaders, Rensselaer County, the Town of North Greenbush, Sage College and elected City Council members.

In addition to carefully composing the Brownfields Taskforce to include representatives of this group, and ensuring that a formal letter goes to this group before each public meeting, this effort will include regular communication with the people most likely to be impacted by this project.

We intend for this communication to be frequent and recurrent. Property owners will be contacted as necessary to keep them involved and informed and the minimum contact points will be:

An introductory phone call to each property or business owner who is likely to be affected by this program will be made well before the first public meeting. During this call we will introduce ourselves and ensure the property or business owner is familiar with the project and the avenues available to them for information and input.

A phone call to each property or business owner selected in the 'initial site selection' process will be made well before the second public meeting at which the initially selected sites will be presented, followed up by a formal letter.

A phone call to each property or business owner selected in the 'final site selection' process will be made well before the third public meeting at which the three final sites will be presented, followed up by a formal letter.

A phone call to each property or business owner of the site selected for remediation planning and to any abutting property owners will be made as soon as possible after the final selection, followed up by a formal letter.

Brownfields Website

River Street Planning will develop a Brownfields Website that will be hosted on TroyNet.net ("the online home of Troy, NY"). River Street will create a homepage that will describe the Brownfields Pilot, including its goals in redeveloping the waterfront. This page will also include links to project area maps, information on Task Force members, community and Task Force meetings, project schedule. Important dates and issues will be highlighted on the home page. As the project progresses, we will add information and pages to the site to describe the site ranking criteria and sites selected for Phase II assessments.

In addition, as the Site Book for the project develops, that information will be added to the web site to provide on-line access to relevant site development information. The Site Book will include the ability for the users to download an ArcExplorer application that provides the ability to view and print maps from the site book. These maps will show a variety of information about each site such as ownership, contact information, parcel size, utility information access, etc. ArcExplorer can also be installed on computers at the public libraries, local schools and colleges to make the information available to members of the public who do not have Internet access.

The site will be updated regularly to include brief summaries of key findings throughout the project, as well as concise summaries of the community and Brownfields Task Force meetings that highlight progress made and community opinion.

A draft outline of the site will be provided to the City in early October 2002, with the initial content provided for upload by mid-November 2002, at least one week prior to the first public meeting. The City will be responsible for posting the site to TroyNet.Net.

Brownfields Newsletter

The Brownfields Newsletter will be used to educate and inform the general public about the progress of the project. It will be particularly useful to publicize key findings and invite interested community members to upcoming community meetings.

River Street Planning will prepare camera ready copy for four newsletters as described below. The City of Troy will be responsible for production and distribution of the Newsletters including all mailing costs. See above in the section regarding publicizing the community meetings for more information on the planned distribution lists.

Each Newsletter will be provided in final draft form to the City no later than three weeks prior to the corresponding public meeting. The City intends to have the Newsletter copied and distributed so that it will be received in house approximately five days prior to the meeting.

Newsletter 1

The first newsletter will define brownfields and include information already understood about brownfields sites in South Troy. It will also describe the work to be undertaken as a part of the Pilot Project and announce the first community meeting.

Newsletter 2

The second newsletter will describe the one to three sites selected for further analysis as well as key findings leading to that selection. It will announce the third community meeting.

Newsletter 3

The third newsletter will describe the findings of the Phase II site assessments, announce the development of the Site Book and information available from that resource and promote the fourth community meeting.

Newsletter 4

The fourth newsletter will be in the format of a “project wrap up” document. It will be structured to provide current project information and to provide a concise description of the overall project to provide a context for the project at completion and in the months following. It will be prepared and distributed prior to the fifth and final community meeting.